

Living Locally Fair 2010

by Pegi Holtz

The second 'Living Locally Fair' was held on Saturday, January 16, 2010. Following the success of last year's Fair which had 38 exhibitors, this year's Fair was attended by about 800 people and had over 50 exhibitors to show their products and services.

The focus was on food and to make people aware of the wide range and quality of food that is produced and sold locally. Eating local food in season has many benefits for consumers in making available fresher food at peak nutritional value.

It also helps to keep our family farms alive and supports the economy of our local communities. Our communities would be poorer places in which to live without our local businesses and associations. Lastly, by eating and buying locally we can help to lower our impact on the environment - by reducing our energy use and promoting biodiversity.

These were all good reasons to come out the Fair. But there's more – the Fair was FUN!

People got the chance to meet and talk to the producers of our food and environmentally friendly products and services that include everything from gardening and animal care to clothing and conservation. A Zero School – A Carbon-Neutral Living Learning Experience was set up in one of the classrooms and led folks through how they could reduce their carbon footprint.

Among the exhibitors was Rare Breeds Canada. The recent newspaper article in The Citizen on one RBC member, Barbara Schaffer (large black pigs) provided a focus for many of the questions. As well, Janet Duncan, who farms the rare breed of cattle called Red Polls (Rare Breeds Canada "endangered" watch list **26-75** annual registrations of 100% pure female stock.), gave a talk about rare breeds to many attentive listeners. This is a portion of the introduction that was given for Janet's talk: *Janet Duncan and her husband Bruce, have a 250 acre certified organic farm near Almonte, on the Appleton Side Road in Mississippi Mills. They have been*

organic since 1981 and certified organic since 1996. Their Heritage Red Poll cattle were acquired in the spring of 1999 just after selling their dairy herd. They chose this breed of beef cattle because “We liked the look of them in a magazine article from Rare Breeds Canada and believed in the idea of trying to preserve biodiversity.” They have about 120 head and sell beef to private customers year round with emphasis on June to November as cattle are on pasture from about mid April till November. They are told that their beef tastes like beef used to taste and because it is a heritage breed it has retained its natural fat marbling without grain feeding. The Duncans follow an organic philosophy related to the raising of cattle to provide chemically free meat, as well as breeding stock for other breeders.

Also attending the Fair was Excalibur Farms of Embrun, Ontario which produces Highland Cattle which are on the Rare Breeds Canada “at risk” watch list (251-750 annual registrations of 100% pure female stock.). Debbie DeCooman of Connaught Acres Farm was there with information about her organic produce and Heritage Breed Chickens. The organizing committee of the Living Locally Fair would love to include more heritage products in any future fairs so if you raise heritage animals and are interested, please contact lindley@russellgardeners.ca.

Torry Reid from the group *Growing Up Organic*, a project of Canadian Organic Growers gave a talk describing how the Ottawa-area Chapter aims to increase youths’ knowledge of organic agriculture and access to organic foods. *Growing Up Organic* educates youth by giving them firsthand experience in organic agriculture by encouraging them to get their hands dirty through the summer camp programs. This includes a week-long farm where youth get the opportunity to live on a local organic farm and also by building schoolyard gardens. This successfully peaks youth’s interest in participating in the organic community – both as consumers and as potential growers. GUO increases youths’ access to organic foods by working closely with daycare centres, schools, restaurants, caterers and local retail stores to help them source directly from local, organic producers. This is accomplished by establishing school salad bars where children have the opportunity to eat a variety of local organic vegetables instead of hot dogs and pizza. It also helps local producers reach new markets in retail stores.

A talk on freshly ground grains was given by George Wright. George and his wife, Kim MacMullin, live on a farm just east of Metcalfe with their three children in a renovated log house and produce their own electricity using solar panels and a wind turbine. They have been growing several types of grain for about 17 years. This past fall they began to grind and sell such grains as wheat, oats, spelt, barley, rye and buckwheat. Another year they hope to have success with flax, kamut and quinoa as well. They sell their grains and grind them on the spot at the Metcalfe Farmers' Market and at the Ottawa Farmers' Market at Landsdowne Park. In the near future they will be opening a shop at their farm on the 9th Line.

We were also pleased to have a talk on Organic Recycling (using worms). Gerrie Baker is fondly known as The Worm Lady. She is passionate about demonstrating simple organic recycling using **eisenia foetida**, red wigglers, to digest and convert garbage into great soil for gardens. Gerrie's focus at present is to take environmental education programs into schools, encouraging children to take personal responsibility for their own organic waste and by teaching good stewardship practices and caring conservation methods. Her goal is to help teachers and students achieve Zero organic waste going to landfill and to encourage and support sustainable agriculture and organic gardening practices.

The very popular and wonderfully aromatic demonstration of "Cooking Winter Vegetables" was provided by Blackhouse Catering. Louise Mulvihill and Darcy Chorney have been working in the food service business since their teens. As Louise says, "When we met we put our talents together; kind of like sugar and spice or in Darcy's case garlic and butter". They started their Blackhouse catering business in the spring of 2009 at the Metcalfe Farmers Market. The name Blackhouse was chosen, because that's what Darcy's last name means in Ukrainian. In addition to making thousands of perogies, cabbage rolls, soups, tortieres and meat pies, they offer a full range of catering services. They use local organic produce when available and also offer vegetarian options. The village of Metcalfe is their home and they take advantage of everything it has to offer. Living locally is living healthy, and they think it is important to eat fresh real food and to know what you are putting in your body.

Later in the day, with the help of six very keen children, Lindley McPhail, President of the Russell and District Horticultural Society and Pegi Holtz, provided a hands-on demonstration of an assortment of pasta making techniques. Everyone was pleased to sample the fresh pasta which was cooked on the spot.

Our society gave out environmentally friendly shopping bags which the visitors were glad to get and the vendors were pleased to take the excess home. We also provided several different kinds of soups, chili and cabbage rolls for lunchtime eating. All the bowls and napkins were biodegradable. Locally packaged milk was available for purchase and along with a fresh roll made a wonderful wintertime lunch. Local vendors sold fair trade tea and coffee and herbal teas and there was no shortage of wonderful baked goods for dessert or to take home.

With gardening tips being offered by the Russell and District Horticultural Society and the United Counties Master Gardeners, plus the opportunity to visit with representatives of the Russell Agricultural Society, the Russell Curling Club, the Russell Historical Society, Squadron 5 Cyclone Air Cadets and RAPA the community groups were also showcased. Running this Fair allows us to meet one of the mandates of the Russell and District Horticultural Society – protection of the environment – in a educational, fun way. If you missed it this year be sure to check out Living Locally Fair 2010, the movie, which can be found at www.LivingLocallyFair.ca. Watch for the live 2011 version in January of next year and come out and join in the fun and the learning.